

**Mr. SCOTT of Virginia:** Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the underlying bill and in strong support of the Women, Infants, and Children program that provides food to new mothers, babies, and children under 5 who have been identified as nutritionally at risk.

WIC ensures that infants and children grow in a healthy manner. The program reduces levels of anemia, increases immunization rates, improves access to regular health care and Social Services, and it improves diets.

Nearly 50 percent of babies born in this country each year benefit from the WIC program, and the success of the program is clear. Numerous studies have shown that pregnant women who participate in WIC have fewer premature births, fewer low and very low birth weight babies, experience fewer fetal and infant deaths, seek prenatal care earlier in their pregnancy, and consume more key nutrients during their pregnancy. Simply put, WIC infants are in better health than eligible infants not participating in WIC.

But the benefits of WIC participation extend beyond the short term. A baby's physical, cognitive, and emotional growth and development depend largely on how much and what types of foods are eaten during pregnancy and the first years after birth, especially the first year after birth. This period is critical because more than half of a child's brain growth is completed by the child's first birthday, and malnutrition during this period can cause irreversible diminution in brain development. And so 4- and 5-year-olds whose mothers participated in WIC during pregnancy have better vocabulary scores than children whose mothers did not receive WIC benefits. This leads to better academic achievement, lower dropout rates, and other factors that we're trying to work on.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, if we want our Nation's children to be the strongest and smartest they can be, we need to make sure that our children are receiving the nutritional support they need during these formative years.

Finally, WIC is cost effective. Serving nearly 10 million people each year, it costs less than \$100 a person. And that cost is so low that if we suspended the Bush tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires for only 1 week, we could pay for the entire WIC program for a full year. And we save a substantial amount of that little cost by reducing health care costs.

Medical costs for a premature baby are much greater than those for a healthy newborn. For a baby born

without complications, the average cost for first year medical costs is about \$4,500, compared to a premature or low birth weight baby which will cost about \$50,000 in short-term medical costs and significantly more in long-term costs resulting from high incidence of mental retardation and learning disabilities.

And so, Mr. Chairman, for those interested only in the budget impact of WIC, the Department of Agriculture estimates that the health care cost savings within 60 days of a child's birth are between \$1.77 and \$3.13 for every dollar invested in the WIC program. Let me say that again. The Department of Agriculture estimates that the health care cost savings within 60 days of a child's birth are between \$1.77 and \$3.13 for every dollar invested in the program.

So, Mr. Chairman, the benefits of the WIC program are not speculative; they are clear. And I commend my colleagues that are here fighting to maintain funding for this important program, and I urge others to do the same.